

and universities. It is time for the Senate, when it reauthorizes the Higher Education Act, to change this.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about what I believe may be one of the most critical pieces of legislation to address human trafficking in the United States, and that is the piece of legislation authored by Senator LEAHY—the Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of this legislation and to add my name to the amendment Senator LEAHY submitted yesterday that adds this important piece of legislation to this current debate.

Senator LEAHY, as we all know, has been a tireless advocate for homeless and runaway youth and for LGBT individuals and for victims of human trafficking. His bill would provide the necessary services and additional protections for all of these young children. So I thank Senator LEAHY again for his continued work on behalf of some of our most vulnerable—our runaway and homeless youth.

As a former attorney general, I certainly believe that additional tools need to be made available to prosecutors so they can prosecute traffickers and johns and that we need to intervene and provide recovery services for victims. I think that need has never been greater. But why I am speaking today on this legislation is because it goes to that critical element of prevention. It supports those who are most susceptible to human trafficking, and that is our runaway and homeless youth.

Preventing one of the most vulnerable segments of our population from falling prey to this modern-day slavery should be one of the top priorities of this Nation. When we talk about trafficking, frequently people think these are young girls who may be coming into our country in containers or are trafficked from elsewhere. But we know that over 80 percent of the people trafficked, especially in the sex trade in this country, are citizens of our country. They are our children. They are American children. So we cannot simply put a face on this that doesn't recognize that American children are being trafficked.

Who among these children are the most vulnerable? It is runaway and homeless youth. So it is our responsibility

to do everything we can to prevent those children from being in a place where they are extraordinarily vulnerable.

We have heard some people say they do not believe that homeless and runaway youth are more susceptible to being trafficked and that we shouldn't single out special services for LGBT youth. I don't believe that, and I know better, because I have been to facilities that provide services for runaway and homeless youth. I don't believe people who say this have ever spoken to the social workers and the professionals who deal with these children every day.

I don't believe people who say that understand that runaway and homeless youth, unfortunately, have been, more than likely, already sexually and physically abused or told every day they are worthless or told that because of who they are, they are no longer welcome in their home. And when you diminish the spirit of a child, you then create a vulnerability in that child to be a target for traffickers.

A lot of people also think this is just a big-city problem. Well, let me tell you some of the stories of North Dakota. Just last June, a 13-year-old runaway from Minneapolis was rescued and her traffickers were arrested in Fargo-Moorhead. Police believe the traffickers were more than likely on their way out to our oil patch with the victim, and they stopped over in Fargo-Moorhead to make a little cash by selling these children in the Fargo-Moorhead area. This is a story we hear over and over again—the vulnerability of children, the trafficking of children into the oil patch in western North Dakota.

In fact, talking to the experts who track advertising of young children, whether it is in the deep or dark Net or whether it is in things such as backpage, they will tell you the spike in trafficking and ads in western North Dakota alarms them and should alarm us. So this is not a big-city problem. We know this is a problem that affects North Dakota. If traffickers are willing to snatch up a runaway in the Twin Cities and bring them out to North Dakota, you can be sure they are trying to prey on this vulnerable population in North Dakota as well.

This is personal for me. I know a lot about this topic because my sister works in this area, and I have spent a lot of time with her staff. They are the largest agency in North Dakota serving runaway and homeless youth populations in Fargo-Moorhead. I have heard stories of how vulnerable these children are. I have heard them tell stories about how the trafficking victims, with whom they have already worked, are sometimes recruited by those bold enough to try to cycle through waiting rooms where they are waiting for these kids.

I have heard the stories of guys waiting just down the block or in parking lots of shelters to snatch up these kids. Also I have heard stories of how once a

young child is involved in this, they then become recruiters of other young runaway children.

These stories are why it is so imperative to take action. And we can take action here in the Senate. We can take action by taking up the Runaway and Homeless Youth Trafficking Prevention Act. This bill reauthorizes vital programs that provide short-term shelter for youth who do not have a place to sleep—imagine that: youth, our children, do not have a place to sleep; crisis interventions and referrals to youth on the street and at drop-in centers—a hand up: we will take you and we will help you recover from whatever has happened in your life; long-term residential services; training and education; and employment support to help get these kids off the street and permanently provide a safe and secure path forward.

Importantly, this bill makes sure that LGTB runaway and homeless youth are not discriminated against when it comes to providing resources and services. We can have an opinion about this, but we all know that no human should be subjected to those kinds of conditions, and we must do everything we can to help them seek and receive the same services as any other child.

By ensuring that runaway and homeless youth have a safe place to stay and the resources they need, we can stem the tide of human trafficking in our country. By identifying vulnerable youth early and as effectively as possible, we can reduce the number of child sex trafficking victims by preventing them from becoming victims in the first place.

We can and we must do everything in our power to not only identify, prosecute, and help victims recover, we must do everything we can to prevent human trafficking. We can take a huge step forward on that by focusing attention and resources on our runaway and homeless youth population.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 178, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows: